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Northern Review

of Writing and the Arts in Canada

THREE NEW STORIES:

- **ASTERS FOR TEDDIE**
  BY D. O. SPETTIGUE
- **THE BURNABY NURSERIES**
  BY ETHEL WILSON
- **A SUNDAY WALK**
  BY NORMAN LEVINE

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Northern Review

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Continuing *THE CANADIAN REVIEW OF MUSIC AND ART, PREVIEW* and *FIRST STATEMENT.*

Asters for Teddie

D. O. Spettigue

Old Dave said it was a visitation on our wickedness, said frills and flowers were sinful, said the Lord wouldn't allow any funeral. But Old Dave was blind and bitter at the darkness. We kept him for his monthly cheque. Nobody listened to his muttering.

Leon was master of the house — owner but for a few more payments — and he would be the one to pay, just as he had paid the endless hospital bills, with grumbling and bargaining. He wanted to keep it simple. He had had a box made ahead of time, out of his own wood, knowing when it would be needed and knowing who would do it cheapest.

"We'll just drive him up to the church," said Leon. "There won't be no need for Sara to tire herself out with fussing. There'll be more than a few neighbors come to stand and look, and we might have to put up a big dinner for them that want to stay. That's all."

But you couldn't tell Sara that. The work was nothing after thirty married years. What mattered was that her boy should have a proper funeral whether or not there was ever one before in that forsaken corner of the Bruce Peninsula, and I doubt there ever was. Teddie died during the night. The doctor left by one a.m., and before the first farm sounds began in the morning she was getting ready.

She called me earlier than usual to fetch the cows. The pasture grass was sheeted grey with spider webs, and soaking wet, and the cows were stubborn to stay in their dry crushed places. I hollered at their big egg-eyes staring, their bubbly green mouths slobbering, and I tanned them with a stick. But you can't hurt a cow, or even move it.

At the barn I pitched down hay for the horses while Leon and Sara milked. When she went in to start breakfast I finished her milking and then Leon told me to bring the slops for the pigs. While they struggled at the trough Leon mixed chop for the brood sow. We watched her for a long time. "That sow'll fetch a sum of money", he said.

By breakfast time Sara had already phoned several of the

neighbors. It was a busy time, late summer, but she was determined about the funeral. "Leon," she said, "You'd better call into town right away for the undertaker. I'll be ready by the time he can come."

"Well now, Sara," Leon calculated through yellow egg yoke and toast," I was thinking maybe we could contract Charlie Graham up here to Canmore so's the fellow from town wouldn't need to come so far."

I knew all about Charlie Graham. He wasn't the only one in the Bruce to own a store and a lumber yard and a funeral parlour all in one, but he was likely the only one to make a botch of all three of them. He drank too much. Sometimes he came to buy a few maples out of our bush or just to wrangle with Leon.

"I don't want any of your besotted friends; I want a dependable undertaker." Sara's voice had an awful edge.

After breakfast I took the cultivator to the potatoes. It was pleasanter to be scuffing dry, grey dirt that day than to be at the house. At the end of each row I turned the horse around and looked toward the back kitchen in case I was needed. I felt a bit helpless. Teddie had been such a quick youngster. He would walk barefooted behind the cultivator and shriek with delight at the fat orange potato bugs that turned up from underneath.

About ten o'clock Leon drove out the lane. When he came in again I guessed it was dinnertime and left off cultivating.

At the table Leon was talking to Charlie Graham while Sara waited on them with a hard silence. Not that she ever said much. She was a big woman without briskness, and heavy on her feet. She might have been handsome once, just judging from the smiles I've seen her give once in a long time, and that I'd work extra hard to get. Only that's not what a hired boy is for. I helped Old Dave with his dinner, he muttering darkly of sin, while Charlie Graham talked too loud and laughed too much in the dining room. He had a bottle right out on the table.

A few cars came and went during the afternoon, a lot for a country Friday. A couple of times I saw Charlie Graham come out and go around the side of the house. Later he went away. Leon didn't come back for supper, so I asked Sara if I could help in the house. "We need more water," she said.

Still, she had herself to blame. There was no need to go to all that trouble. I mean it's all well and good to have a pretty funeral, but it seemed to me Leon was being more sensible about it, and she had all the work to do herself, more than she needed to

have. That day she scrubbed the whole house, upstairs and down. After supper we finished the chores together. When Leon came home Sara prepared a late supper for him, not saying anything but looking cranky, and scrubbing the kitchen woodwork while he ate. The front room had been done first.

Before bed I went in to see Teddie. He was beautiful. He looked like he looked one day at church. He had fallen asleep even in the hard oak-backed pew, his head drooped over on to his shoulder, and one soft tanned arm stretched toward the board floor. He had the silkiest white girly hair fuzzed in curls. He wore a new white sailor suit whose broad blue collar was crumpled under his neck. He was wearing the same white suit in the coffin, only this time it was laid out flat. He never looked real when he was alive, and now he could not look dead.

There were three bunches of flowers, not bought ones, but flowers from home gardens sent to make our front room even less like itself, and to add to the unlived-in, heavy mustiness of a country parlour. I had seen the red asters before. They were from Andersons'. Funny how even an aster can look so different beside a pallid face, when the face is very, very white and the aster a deep, deep red, almost a purple red.

I went out and walked dumbly around the kitchen because I could not talk. After a few turns I managed to say, "He looks pretty nice, Old Dave." And Old Dave muttered, "Looks, does he?"

The funeral was Saturday. I kept out of the way in the morning because the house hissed with people's strange whispering. It all meant more work for Sara. The neighbors stayed only minutes, gossiped, didn't help. They all excused Leon's tippling. "Poor Leon," they said, "He thought so much of Teddie. The lad was fair to be a great help to him." I helped Sara with the chores.

At noon I ate in the kitchen with Old Dave. The dining-room was full; the house would be full until funeral time. Old Dave would not eat. He grimaced, fumbled uncertainly at his rough beard, and whispered hoarsely, interminably. I couldn't stand it. "Old Dave," I begged, though not so loud that they could hear me in the next room, "Old Dave, you got to eat. Look, even Collie is eating."

"Look, is it?" He shook and clenched both obsolete fists over his spoon. "I don't look. I don't see your sights and your wickedness. I hear and I smell." He glared full at my face with those horrible fish eyes and chuckled. "I hear the tyke. What do I smell?" And

he would eat no dinner.

The neighbors finished their dinner and left. An old lady stayed, and the Andersons — Mr. A., Mrs. A., and Dan. Andersons were our nearest neighbors to the north. Dan was the only young fellow I ever saw around there. The Andersons used to drive Sara and Teddie to church. I don't know who the old lady was.

While they were cleaning up I went into the parlour. The heavy, dark-stained door had been closed all morning and I knew that meant keep out. But I went in anyway. Somehow I wanted to check if he looked the same, if maybe he had moved just a bit, had opened an eye.

The old brown drapes, an inch thick, were still drawn over the windows and the mustiness was worse. It was no place for flowers that belong in long farm gardens in summer rows. Outside they make the air sweet; inside they make it heavy and stupid like a bumble bee that has crawled into too many pollen cups.

Two more bunches had been stuck up in high baskets. They showed shadowy in the bad light. Only yesterday's scarlet asters were insistently alive. I stood just inside the door where I could see the dust-dark-brown light like buckwheat honey, and the white sailor suit spilled in it by a horrible mistake, and the red reflections of the asters in the coffin as though some of their petals had been torn off and scattered into the box. And then the sweet dry hay-smell got worse and I went out of the parlour feeling sick at my stomach.

Sara saw me come out and gave me a queer twisted look as though she had caught me wringing the heads off the banties that she tried extra hard to raise. I didn't look back but I knew she went into the parlour.

The kitchen was empty and quiet but for Old Dave who never came out of his corner and never left off muttering. I hurried past on the way to the door but he heard and grabbed at my shirt.

"You hear them?" he whispered.

"No, Old Dave," I said, "I don't hear anything."

I wanted to get out but he leaned his jelly-eyes and grease-marked mustache close to my face and hissed, "Out back. Leon and the one with the ale voice. Hear? He's trying to sell him more hollow timber. They'll bargain and bargain." Old Dave leaned back and smirked to himself. I waited, not knowing what he meant or what I ought to say.

"The wee lad," Old Dave hissed again, "What of the wee

lad?" "He's dead," I said, "They're going to bury him in about an hour."

"Going to, are they? Not while they're bargaining, are they? There's monie a slip, eh?" Old Dave giggled and rocked forward again. "I told her. I said to her, you'll repent your flouting the Lord with wicked flowers and frills and sights for evil eyes. And did she listen? Her against the Lord." And his face convulsed.

The shaking stopped all of a sudden as Sara came into the room. She said nothing but I spun around and faced her as fast as if she had hollered at me.

You could never imagine what her face looked like. It was stiff and hard — she was all stiff and hard — and white but not like Teddie was white. She was a chipped grey like the shale ledges along the creek when August is dry and the water has dropped away from the banks.

"What did you do to him," she asked me, and her voice was drained dry too. I hadn't done anything. I hadn't even gone close but I didn't tell her that. I just stared cow-eyed until she said, twice, "We need more water."

Then I was awake and I said, "I brought extra water last night, remember? You told me — ".

"Fetch the water." I high-tailed it to the pump and fetched in two slopping, brim-full buckets.

She hadn't moved. "Are you for or against?" she asked me. "For," I said, not knowing what I was for.

"Then come in here and help me."

We went in and the smell was still there. I stopped at the door, not yet knowing. The same shaded brownness, the pure white of the sailor suit, the same dry green and yellow flowers transplanted, and the red asters close to the paper face.

Out of a clear sky I went weak at the knees. Sara had walked over to the yellow crooked-grained box. When I still hung on to the doorknob she turned around and snapped at me as if she loathed me.

"Why don't you come in?" she said. "See what they do to me, see what good it does me to try, see why anything that isn't ugly or piggish or cheap might as well never begin? Well?"

She was pulling him up out of his coffin and the red stains, the purple-red petals that never were an aster oozed out of his nostrils and oozed out of his ears and soaked into the white blouse and the

broad blue collar. All the time his face never changed and his eyes stayed closed.

Between us we took off the white and blue and splotched clothes, bathed his face and sponged off his hair like I never want to see again, and we plugged him with cotton. The colour stayed out of her face and her jaws were locked so tight I was sure they could never open again. I would have been afraid to hear, anyway.

At last, I said, "What are you going to put on him?" She didn't hit me but she stiffened like a rooster ready to scrap.

"That's what they'd like to know." She burst out mad and I stood and let it come at me. "He hasn't anything else and they know it. If they'd had their way he'd have been buried stark naked and they'd have sold his clothes for booze. But I had my way, the same as I did when I adopted him and they said he'd only be an expense, and I bought him one little suit and by Almighty God he's going to wear it. It can't be wicked, and he's got to look right when he goes. Who knows he's not the last pretty thing I'll see, and I'll hang on to the memory of his funeral till I'm ready for my own, such as I'll get. Only we haven't got much time."

She washed the suit and dried it with an iron and behind the locked parlour door we put it back on him. We straightened his collar, laid him out neat and folded his hands on his middle.

"Now," she said, "We'll collect all the neighbors that will come. You'll have to try and drive the car, and we'll get enough men to carry him to the plot. At any rate the plot is mine! We'll have to stop at the parsonage for the minister if he's around, and promise a pig for the service. I've got a woman's notion his fee's already gone on liquor."

When it was time I went out and started the old Ford. Mr. Anderson and Dan and Sara and I carried the coffin out and put it in where the back seat of the car had been. And Sara brought some of the flowers and spread them around it.

I went back into the house and told Old Dave if Leon came to say we were at the cemetery.

"The graveyard, is it?" Old Dave queried. "Is he there yet?" Then Old Dave fumbled for my sleeve and pulled at it and whispered hoarsely, "You were uncommon long in the parlour. Was it the devil, then, with her frills and her flowers? I told her she'd repent her wickedness. The Lord forbade it, d'you mind? The wee lad, eh? How's the wee lad?"

We were three cars long and we found the minister at the church in his work clothes. He put on a black gown over them and came with us into the church yard. After he was finished Sara went and sat in the car. Mr. Anderson and Dan and I filled in the hole and smoothed it all over on top. Then we went back to the cars and left the asters on the dirt.

PAUL BLACKBURN

ALBA

The clouds that stretch across the sky at dawn,
thin rose strips of cirrus, window-height,
force eyes half-open to give a day good morning.
I lie here, not daring to move from bed
for fear of waking a love who sleeps,
her blondness close. Her face, a mask of peace,
will shatter on the light to make my coffee
which I shall drink before the sky is red.

Mind slides to subway through the city dawn;
before the clattered descent, eyes measure height
of greystone buttressed, washed in the sun of morning.
Yet all the while, my body supine in bed
grows tense above a love that never sleeps
but changes like the light and knows no peace.
Eyes measure the swift descent and shatter. Coffee
a theory poised above the street. And red

the mask of dawn mounts the hardening height
of a metal stripped morning where no one loves or sleeps
or measures peace. But blonde or dark or red,
I shall have coffee before I move from bed.

TO OUR READERS

For the second time we are approaching our readers with a request for donations. Last year's appeal met with a very generous response, and we hope you will give us your support again. As you know, the publication of a Canadian literary magazine is in the nature of an act of faith, and the survival of Northern Review depends to an unusual extent on the cooperation of its readers.

The objective for this year's fund is $1500, and a list of contributions already received appears below. There is a remainder of $1300 still to be obtained. If you believe that a magazine devoted to contemporary writing and criticism has a function to perform in Canada, we hope you will help us by contributing to the guarantors' fund.

The Editors

A final word should be said about the non-profit periodical, the little magazine which, published by a small and confident group of talented people, not infrequently has given encouragement to a few genuinely creative writers, to poets in particular. Its literary and other criticisms are severe but usually well-informed, written brilliantly and without restraint. These small and generally short-lived magazines which attract few readers and as a consequence no advertisers, play a most important part in the cultural life of our country.

From the Report of the Royal Commission on the Arts

GUARANTOR'S FUND, 1951-52

AMOUNT REQUIRED FOR PUBLICATION FROM OCTOBER '51 TO OCTOBER '52 (VOLUME 5) $1500

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED TO DATE :

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Pearce Allan, Literary Agents, are anxious to procure MSS of short stories, novels, mysteries, etc.

Address: 419 Lake Shore Rd., Mimico, Ontario.

The Totems Press is planning to compile an anthology of *Modern Canadian Writing*. Manuscripts must reach the editors by September 31, 1951, and should be sent to the address below :

The Totem Press,
161 Whitfield Street,
London W.I., England,

The Burnaby Nurseries

Ethel Wilson

The Burnaby Nurseries is a chapter from *Tuesday and Wednesday*, one of two novellas in a book to be published by MacMillan's.

In what good humour Morty made his way out to Burnaby to the nurseries to see if old Cameron had a job for him. This was the kind of job that he liked, something reg'lar but not too reg'lar. One catch, he knew as he bounced along in the interurban railway, was that some years ago he had worked at these nurseries and had been fired by old Cameron for being lazy, negligent and incompetent; not grave faults perhaps, but faults which enrage a competent and industrious employer. Morty questioned whether old Cameron would really remember him, as old Cameron had hardly seen Morty and had dealt with him through intermediaries. So all of this did not trouble Morty very much as he travelled along through the outskirts of the sprawling city of Vancouver and looked out of the car windows at the soft grey day, day soft and damp and enervating, air opaque and lethargic, holding promise of rain. The handsome mountains which line the northern sky of Vancouver receive the impact of bodies of air traveling across from the Pacific ocean, down from the Queen Charlotte Islands, down from the Aleutians, and these bodies of air, striking the handsome mountains, grow heavy, and sullen with increase; the break, and the rain falls and falls, and newcomers from the bright prairies wonder if they won't go back home if there's one more day of this rain, but oldtimers of Vancouver, though a little weary of the rain, know always that when a glorious day breaks on the green ground and on the mountains, this rain will be forgotten in the brilliant air. Mort was nearly an oldtimer, and the rain coming soon didn't bother him, and the thought of old Cameron didn't bother him much, but the need of a job and some money in his pocket bothered him a little. He rather hoped to see out there a friend of Mrs. Emblem's, by name Mr. Mottle, before he ever came up against old Cameron, because Mr. Mottle knew Mort under the most favourable of circumstances and would certainly put in a word for him with old Cameron. Mr. Mottle was very respectable and was a sort of caretaker out at the nurseries.

Mort's acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Mottle was social and slight, but they were often quoted by Mrs. Emblem, and before Mr. Mottle took the caretaking job away out at the nurseries, Mr. and Mrs. Mottle had been members of Mrs. Emblem's Bridge Club, although they only played whist which they preferred — whist being optional at the Bridge Club. They were conservative people, not quite as dashing as Mr. Thorsteinsen and Maybelle Slazenger with whom they had a chatting acquaintance. The Bridge Club was a very nice place for Mr. Mottle in particular because he was a male gossip, passionately inquisitive, and the Bridge Club presented opportunities for making one's way from person to person, collecting irrelevant data about these persons and about the other members which was at once transmuted into significance by Mr. Mottle and by Mrs. Mottle too, and was passed along, instantly becoming news. Mr. Mottle was also devoted to disease and the discussion of disease, not so much in the abstract — although he enjoyed that too — but with reference to A's kidneys, B's liver, and C's guitar of the stummick; thus he romped merrily amongst his friends' organs, publicizing them on the way. Mort did not know all this, as he was not what you would call well acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Mottle, but he had met them once or twice when he was with Myrtle at Mrs. Emblem's place, and had also hung over the fence at the bowling green and had encountered Mr. Mottle doing the same thing on more than one summer evening. So that although he did not know Mr. Mottle at all, he felt that he knew him very well and auspiciously, and that Mr. Mottle would be bound to recommend Mrs. Emblem's nephew-by-marriage to old Cameron as a desirable gardener and as a man of excellent character. The job was as good as his. What job? Any job.

Mort got off the interurban car and walked the five or six blocks down the rough irregular road bordered by half-cleared and uncleared land which led to the nurseries. He looked about him appreciatively. There to the north where opaque clouds hung were, of course, the invisible mountains. Burnaby Lake lay not far away. In this depression of a country of hills and wooded ridges which lay near yet remote (it seemed) from Vancouver, the sun, when it shone, poured down its warmth; the land was well watered, the nurseries, with the good brown soil and the long rows of now decimated green, with the potting sheds, the long greenhouses, a few shacks, stretched in earthy richness. The tempo of slowness and peace was another ex-

halation of the land, like the earth and humus smell, and the faint and pleasant rotting odour of manures. Unlike the Chinese vegetable gardens which lay far away beyond South Vancouver on the River Road and on the delta islands of the Fraser River where the cultivated ground gave evidence of fierce unresting meticulous physical exertion, the nurseries in Burnaby displayed an easeful life in death of the soil. The very sight of the Chinese vegetable gardens — where a few active small men worked incessantly early and late, planting things, transplanting, cultivating, with an arithmetical calm ferocity and industry — would have repelled Morty in search of a job. He would regard slightingly, as a superior man, the small expert Chinamen squatting, under their wide hats, through the hot summer day, living their hidden Oriental lives of great frugality in adjacent shacks. Here after long days of planting their vegetables with elegant horticultural geometry — long rows radiating, spinning, crossing and recrossing to the river's edge, green against brown — they gather in earthy monastic conviviality and eat their rice and fish and pork when the day's work is done. Morty would have seen in the rich Chinese truck gardens little beauty, only a hard repellent toil, good enough for Chinks but not for him; but here, as he strolled in at the gate of old Cameron's nurseries, was the kind of work whose doing or evasion he understood.

I will mooch about a bit, he thought, not wanting to hurry things; so he mooched. Anyone interested in plant nurseries would at once know that work was being done, the slow work that tends shrubs, and young trees, Anyone unfamiliar with plant nurseries would think the place deserted and the work at a standstill. So Morty mooched, not much wanting to see old Cameron in person — yet — but thinking it better to find Mr. Mottle first, and so approach old Cameron by the Mottle avenue. No Mottle in the greenhouses or in the gardens, so Morty opened the door of a shed that might be — and was — an office, and looked in. He was a little apprehensive of seeing old Cameron but, fortunately, there was only Mr. Mottle doing nothing in particular.

"Yes?" asked Mr. Mottle.

Morty took off his hat. "You wouldn't remember me perhaps, Mr. Mottle," he said frankly and engagingly, " but my name's Johnson, Mortimer Johnson, and Mrs. Emblem is my wife's aunt. I seen you at Mrs. Emblem's place and down at the bowling green if you remember."

Mr. Mottle at once held out his hand. He wore a hat and kept it on. He was very much pleased to see Mort and asked him how Mrs. Emblem was and said that he and Mrs. Mottle was only talking about her the other day, and how in winter evenings they'd missed the Bridge Club living out here, and how about going outside. So they went outside, and there was a box and there was an upturned barrel, and Mr. Mottle sat down on the box and Mort sat down on the barrel and Mr. Mottle took out his pipe with a spurious air of leisure that suited Mort well, and, encouraged by this, Mort rolled one, and they settled down to a good talk — Mr. Mottle the beneficent elder man of affairs and Mort not young, but younger, and of an engaging candour and attention. Mort left the conversation to Mr. Mottle, thinking that the job part could come later. Into the sounds of Mr. Mottle's speech crept, sometimes, but not regularly, echoes of his English boyhood. He was a friendly man, and, as I say, a male gossip, and always ready for a talk at his ease like this. It appeared that Mr. Cameron was away but might be back by six, or he would phone, and he — Mr. Mottle — had to stick around.

"And how's Mrs. Emblem?" enquired Mr. Mottle. "She's a fine woman, a very very lovely woman. She going to marry old Thorsteinsen? My wife — Mrs. Mottle — she says he's well fixed. She says he's got a homestead in Saskatchewan and he don't *have* to sell Fuller brushes. But you show me a man who's well fixed and chooses to sell Fuller brushes at *his* age! You tell your Aunty all that glitters isn't gold and that goes for old Thorsteinsen's front teeth. I seen him have a little money on the game under the table at the Bridge Club, but that doesn't mean a man's got money in the bank because he's got it under the table. She'd best be sure how he's fixed first. I said to Mrs. Mottle you tell Mrs. Emblem to hold off of Thorsteinsen where Matrimony's concerned until she finds out. He's okay for an evening, but for marriage he's too flash. You tell her. How's your wife?"

Mort was just about to say that Myrtle was fine but as that seemed a conversational dead-end he said, "I'm kinda worried about her, she's not so good."

Nothing could suit Mr. Mottle better than for Myrtle to be not so good. He lowered his voice, leaned towards Mort, peered into his eyes and said with intensity — this being exactly the kind of conversation that he liked — "What's her trouble?"

"The doctors don't seem to know," replied Mort, hedging.

Mort's angel, on hearing Mort say this, became extremely irritated. It buffetted Mort, or his id (or psyche) and said sincerely For God's sake why do you have to make up things like that ? Isn't the truth good enough for you? And the id (or psyche) answered Sh, this is the way I like it, and so Mort continued "No, not a one of the doctors seem to know."

"Doctors . . . !" exclaimed Mr. Mottle. "You're telling *me !* Doctors . . . !" He lowered his voice and looked around as though doctors might be creeping up through the shrubs, and said "There was a prominent doctor come here for seedlings last spring — wallflowers it was — and that doctor he was the stoopidest man I ever see and if I told you his name you'd be surprised. No int'rest in 'elth! No int'rest in medicine! Only wanted 'is wallflowers and get away. That's all *'e* cared about. I could of told 'im more in fifteen minutes than ever'e learned in college. Exhibited no int'rest. Well, I said to Mrs. Mottle, there's doctors for you!" Mr. Mottle, foiled and still smarting, had a better audience in Mort who had plenty of time and no convictions about medicine, and was ready to agree with anything that Mr. Mottle might say, especially as he wished to ingratiate and endear himself and so to establish himself by good report from Mr. Mottle to old Cameron, who was inclined to be tough with you. So Mort continued to sit on an upturned barrel and look respectfully at Mr. Mottle and encourage him with his kind brown eyes, and nod, and say emphatically "Sure," and "I'll say," and Mr. Mottle read admiration in the brown eyes, and went on expounding and Mort went on thinking Where the devil is old Cameron.

"I'll tell you," said Mr. Mottle, "what's wrong with your wife. I'll tell you just what's wrong with Mrs. Johnson. It's the colin." He had neither seen Myrtle nor heard of the nature of her complaint which was non-existent, but that was of no consequence to him. "Tell her from me. You tell Mrs. Johnson to flush the colin and keep the kidneys clean and she won't need to have no truck with doctors."

"Thank you, I'll tell her, Mr. Mottle," said Mort respectfully, wondering Who the devil's Colin?

"You see that man," continued Mr. Mottle confidentially, "that feller going along there with a sack of fertilizer? Pore feller, 'e can't 'ardly carry it. You wouldn't think 'e'd been a passionate man in 'is day would you, but 'e did used to. What d'you s'pose

is wrong with *'im?*"

Mort looked at an undersized man who bent beneath a small sack which he carried on his shoulders as he trudged beside a long furrow of good brown soil.

"I wouldn't know," he said. The man might be elderly, or lazy, or have corns, or rheumatism.

"Well what would you think?" insisted Mr. Mottle. Mort thought.

"Rheumatism," he suggested.

Mr. Mottle smiled omnisciently, pulling down his lips, and shook his head from side to side.

"Wrong," he said. " 'E's got a tapeworm."

"You don't say," said Mort, and he looked with more interest after the unwilling host of the tapeworm, who continued plodding down the gardens.

"Did the doctor say?" enquired Mort.

" 'Say'! No doctor didn't need to 'say.' I took one look at 'im, and I said Tapeworm. Might have two for all you know," said Mr. Mottle knowledgeably and proceeded to his climax which usually interested people. "I s'pose you didn't know I'd had the tapeworm? Well I did. You can't tell *me*. Went to prett' near every doctor in Canada and U.S.A. Couldn't do nothing for me till I went to a feller here and he delivered me of two tapeworms head and all. Man and wife as you might say. Yards long apiece them two reptiles was if they was an inch. I regret I never kep' them two reptiles but they sure were a spectacle for any museum. And now look at me!" Mort looked at him. "If I'd known enought then to flush the colin and keep the kidneys clean I'd never have had 'em." Just as well as it was though, for Mr. Mottle had the memory, and retrospectively the reptiles gave him a great deal of pleasure, and were well known to all his acquaintances. Mort was pleased, too, but was beginning to get restive. He began to talk of the job.

"You wouldn't want to *live* here, or would you," asked Mr. Mottle. "There's two old shacks and me and Mrs. Mottle took one and transformed it into an 'ome. When Mr. Cameron's mother-in-law seen it 'e said 'Well Mr. Mottle, that is indeed a transformation.' If old Cameron," he became familiar, "took a fancy to you and if I recommend you he's very liable to take my say-so and if there's a job coming up which there is for a man who's a good potting-shed man and would see to some of the firing and you and your wife

wanted to live here and not come traipsing out at all times, old Cameron'd let a man have that other shack and do it up for himself rent free. Like to come along, and I'll show you." Mr. Mottle got slowly up from his box and Mort arose from his barrel and the two of them proceeded down a path, Mr. Mottle going at his rather aged pace and Mort walking behind at the easy rolling gait that was natural to him.

There stood on the confines of the nursery garden three shacks near together, relics of old schemes and old abandonments, One had caved in, one looked as though it might cave in, and one was a natty painted dwelling of white and blue. Mr. Mottle and Morty stopped and regarded these.

"You wouldn't believe," (and you wouldn't) said Mr. Mottle indicating the shacks with his pipe, "that me and Mrs. Mottle transformed this 'ome you see before you from a shack prett' near as bad as that one there," and he pointed at the middle shack whose door swung half open, repulsive home of bats and spiders. "Old Cameron said Go ahead, and will you believe me it only cost us the paint and some finishing nails and I cut the cedar shingle in the bush with a shake knife and picked up a bit of stove piping laying around the furnace house and a bit of two-by-four laying around the carpenter shop and we brung our things out and here we are snug as bugs and rent free. That's the way, young feller. And there's no reason but what that other shack — not the one that's fell in — wouldn't do the same, if you're handy. Cost you nothing or near to nothing. You and the wife handy?"

Mort assured Mr. Mottle, incorrectly, that he and Myrtle were handy and you couldn't beat Myrt for fixing things up, there wasn't anything she couldn't do, and so Mr. Mottle and Mort stood and regarded the smart little home, product of the undoubted handiness of Mr. and Mrs. Mottle, and also the residence nearby of bats and owls, and their two minds were occupied by two different illusory visions. Mr. Mottle had a vision of Mort and Myrtle, handy and neat as the Mottles, quickly transforming by their industry the melancholy and dilapidated shack into a trim and simple two-room residence like their own, and then how nice to superintend and advise and boss and own this nice feller to whom he — Mr. Mottle — was taking such a fancy, and in the evenings how nice to visit back and forth with Johnson and that refined looking wife of his, and it would be company for Mrs. Mottle who found life at the nurseries

a bit dull without her friends and the Bridge Club, and in winter evenings a good game of whist. And in front of Mort floated the illusory vision of the melancholy and dilapidated shack transformed without any effort on his or Myrtle's part to the twin of Mr. Mottle's house, white with blue trim, and a pleasant easy steady job of stoking and potting, and him and Myrtle getting in to a show whenever they wanted in the evenings and not too much of Mr. and Mrs. Mottle. He had a presentiment that one could come to be owned too much by Mr. Mottle.

"Now we're here you better come in," said Mr. Mottle, and they went into the neat and linoleumed interior of his home and had a bit of bread and some cheese and some Postum because Mrs. Mottle was away and Mr. Mottle wasn't such a hand at making coffee and you couldn't 'ardly tell the difference.

"Mrs. Mottle shouldn't a went to Calgary but nothing would do," said Mr. Mottle. "She shouldn't be travelling around. She's a real liability to the railroads, she is. Mrs. Mottle's got a heart," and he looked seriously at Mort. "Is that so," said Mort, "tt tt, that's too bad!"

"Yes sir, Mrs. Mottle has a heart," said Mr. Mottle, "but her younger sister was took sick in Calgary and nothing will do but she must go. She's got trouble somewheres around the juggler, her sister has. They *call* it goitre, but it don't sound like goitre to *me. I* think . . ." and he whispered to Mort.

"Oh, yeah, sure," said Mort, nodding. "Sure."

When they had finished the Postum and Mr. Mottle had washed up and put away, and again the little home was as neat and unattractive as a pin, they decided to go back to the office, because old Cameron didn't like to ring up on the phone and no one there. So then they sat around and talked in a desultory fashion and it was quite late, about six o'clock, before the telephone rang to some purpose, and it was old Cameron.

"Yes Mr. Cameron," said Mr. Mottle into the telephone.

" . . . "

"Yes Mr. Cameron."

" . . . "

"Yes Mr. Cameron."

" . . . "

"No there wasn't. He never called up."

" . . . "

"I'll be sure to tell him . . . sure . . . hold them back . . . don't let him send them . . . deliver the spray . . . and oh say Mr. Cameron there's" (voice lowered) "a nice feller here looking for a job. If I may suggest, just the feller to take Tompkins' place if Tompkins goes . . . yes, experienced . . . no he wasn't fired . . . he just finished a big landscapin' proposition up in West Vancouver but him and his wife would like to move out to Burnaby . . . yes, I know him well . . . known him for years . . . aunt's an old friend of me and Mrs. Mottle . . . no, no . . . sure . . . I told him . . . no loafing on the job but he's not that kind Mr. Cameron . . . no . . . very good . . . I'll tell him . . . and lay an order for ten more sacks . . . okay Mr. Cameron." And old Cameron rang off and so did Mr. Mottle.

"There, you heard me; he says to come around Monday and he'll see you and I'd say the job is as good as yours," and Morty thanked Mr. Mottle and thanked him again and as soon as it was decently possible to leave, he left, and walked down the rough irregular road which led to the interurban car.

Morty sat in the interurban car and as he looked out of the window he did not see bush, small houses, bush, more bush, and drizzly gray mist sliding past. He saw himself and Myrtle settled without any exertion in a natty small white and blue home of their own rent free in a non-exacting and agreeable job, and in the perpetual sunshine that always surrounds one's most indulgent dreams. As he approached the city boundary his dream was spiked by the thought of the possible non-concurrence of Myrtle. Incredible as it would seem to most people that Myrt might prefer the two slatternly rooms at the top of the house off Powell Street and the proximity of the movies and Irma Flask to a neat home of one's own contriving, and steady work in the country, it was none the less possible. However, Morty turned his mind away from anything as uncomfortable as argument with Myrtle, and as he got off the interurban car and walked towards and along Powell Street he was not really walking along Powell Street at all on a drizzly evening, but was idly basking in the sunshine outside a white cottage with blue trim on the windows, and Myrtle was inside the white cottage making coffee not Postum. He did not see, on the other side of Powell Street, his wife's cousin Victoria May Tritt who had paused to look at him, but his eyes picked up the tall figure of a drunk who lolled against the Fisherman's Book Shop and gesticulated slowly and largely to the passersby. His eyes informed his wandering mind

that for gossakes if it wasn't old Eddie; and so the moments of Mortimer Johnson and Eddie Hansen and Victoria May Tritt converged and met outside the Fisherman's Book Shop. Morty quickened his steps. It *was* Eddie. Well for gossakes.

The white cottage with blue trim vanished from Mort's mind as he fetched up with old Eddie the silly old fool drunk there on Powell Street, and at almost the same minute Eddie became aware of Morty, and the handshaking and wrestling began to take place which Victoria May witnessed as she stood still on the other side of the road. Other people witnessed it, and all this to do occasioned the turning aside and going around of passersby who did not wish to become involved in the affectionate greeting of two old friends or drunks. Eddie and Mort swayed to and fro, talking at the same time, and Morty thought it would be a good thing to get old Eddie to turn around and go back with Morty to the Regal Rooms where Eddie stayed; but Eddie thought that it would be a good thing to get old Morty to go along to the dock with him and see if they couldn't find that suitcase of Eddie's down there. And because Eddie was stronger, and drunk, and impervious to argument, and because Mort was so glad to see Eddie, drunk or sober, that he'd do anything to oblige, they set off, clasping each other, in the direction of the dock; and Victoria May, who could no longer see them for the crowd and the mist, hastened on her way to the church.

Morty felt some kind of protective feeling for Eddie drunk. He had never come across Eddie drunk before. He had got drunk *with* Eddie, which was quite a different thing, and did not engender a protective feeling. But how Morty, sober, with a fellow-feeling for Eddie (high-rigger, swell fellow, good old Eddie) drunk, shepherded and steered and protected Eddie although he had no confidence that they would ever find the suitcase on the dock — but, just to oblige, he did this; and it was a good thing he'd happened along, because by the time they reached the dock it was quite dark and the rain made the visibility very bad and goodness knows what would have happened to Eddie the old fool crossing the street if Morty hadn't been along to take care of him. Mort, I wish you to understand, was very very kind to Eddie, and almost gentle with him, if anyone can be gentle with a high-rigger who measures over six feet and is drunk.

By the time they reached the place at which you turn off to go down to the dock — and their progress had been slow — the street lights were all on, and there is nothing like street lights for

announcing the arrival of night. It was unquestionably night. A light shone in an office where the Company's dock watchman was on duty. But as the watchman had gone into the lavatory for a moment, he could not and did not see the wavering arguing figures of two men, one tall and one shorter, cross the beam of light that fell from his window upon the wooden planking of the dock. He did not see the two men advance onto the dock. If he had, he would have gone out and shouted Hey at them, and found out what they were doing there, and turned them back if he could. But as he was in the washroom, no one saw Eddie and Mort walk together along the dock in the direction of a faint high light at the end of the dock, both of them fairly contented, yes, *very* contented in their own mutual company. It did not occur to Morty to be nervous of Eddie's safety on a dock when he was drunk, because Mort knew, if he had happened to think of it but he didn't, that Eddie had teetered about on half the docks and wharves of the logging camps of the coast of British Columbia and had never fallen in yet and never would. So Morty did not accompany Eddie on to the dock with any idea of protecting him from falling in — trust Eddie — but for the pleasure of being with him and because when they did not find the suitcase — and they would not — then Morty would go with Eddie back to the Regal Rooms and see him to bed. And next day he would go back and visit with him. He really did not think of Myrtle at all, and anyway he literally had his hands full, clutching hold of two hundred and forty pounds of old Eddie.

Eddie whose head was clearing a little, had a lot to tell Mort about the fellows they both knew who used to be up at Jarvis Inlet and especially about a very very funny guy called Mike Jerkin who was now with Eddie at Knight Inlet who had a stammer which he used to exploit when he got in wrong with people and whom Eddie could take off to the King's taste; and Eddie broke away from Mort and acted out Mike Jerkin the time the moose got into the cook-house. By this time they had reached the end of the dark and meagrely lighted wharf and had for a moment forgotten about the suitcase because of Eddie telling in a rather drunken way — but still funny — about what Mike Jerkin said to the moose, when Eddie took a lunge in his story and stepped off the dark wharf into the dark night and fell with a tremendous splash into the dark water which closed over two or three times and only a dirty spangly light moved on the surface of the water, although there were signs of commotion beneath.

Painting

Andrew Bell

SOCIAL COMMENT IN CANADIAN PAINTING

Now this may appear a naive preliminary enquiry — what is the precise connotation, in terms of art, of the phrase 'social comment'? The clear, uncomplicated meaning for most of us is simply pictorial talk about people — what they are like; what they do; what, in short, makes them tick. But, unhappily, little in our complex epoch seems to explain itself with ease and the full contemporary answer for this particular enquiry is no exception.

And that is because 'social comment' means one thing to the Communists, and something altogether opposite to the adherent of the free nations. It is, indeed, a form of notice that this cleavage extends far beyond the obvious realms of politics and economics. Even painting, which was formerly thought as of right to transcend ideologies and national boundaries, is no longer exempt. Traditionally with western civilization art has only been deemed significant to the extent to which it reflected honest, disinterested aesthetic convictions.

It had to be 'pure art', or to use an old-fashioned phrase 'art for arts' sake.' Any departure from this precept made it automatically suspect aesthetically. And for most Canadians this presumably remains true to-day; work falling short of such a standard is very likely to be in the nature of propaganda, which is the negation of true art.

The communists, on the other hand, believe that for painting to be really important, it must be 'art with a purpose'. Abstracts, 'still - lifes', often landscapes, tend to concern themselves little with such an objective, and so they are likely to get short shrift. For the Soviet Union, which has an official 'line' for almost every facet of human behaviour, insists that the arts, like all other activities within its control, shall advance with the utmost fidelity ideological aims. In other

words, social comment of a kind is what matters. Painting shall preoccupy itself primarily with people, praising the alleged achievements and new happiness for everyone under communism, and decrying the dismal alternative of capitalistic exploitation and human misery.

Is it any wonder then that there are individuals who hold suspect this term 'social comment' or are unsure of its implications? Because if it involves distasteful special pleading, the phrase constitutes a denial of everything we believe significant art must be. But social comment of itself is most certainly not this. Valid expressions, as the writer construes them remain as they have all through history — disinterested and truthful (as the artist conceives truth to be) depictions of humanity in relation to its background. And if I have rather laboured this matter of definitions I believe I have some justification.

For this question of social comment, as it is historically interpreted, holds substantial consequence for the future growth of Canadian art. Painting in this Country, alone among our creative arts, has acquired the status of a strong native idiom. Literature, sculpture, musical composition, despite welcome flashes of power, still continue to lack the coherence and force of an indigenous voice. But with our pictures it is quite otherwise. The contributions of the Group of Seven and artists such as Emily Carr and David Milne are eloquent statements concerning the anatomy, the special qualities, of the Canadian land. These works are frequently acceptable under international artistic standards, and it is thus also, though to a lesser degree, in the still-life and abstract fields. In the matter of social comment, however, the peopling of our particular portion of North America — we cloak with silence and pretty thoroughly, the sorts of things Canadians are and are not.

Canadian painting in this category can be quickly summarized. Krieghoff and Kane were the first. The former described attractively picturesque aspects of French-Canadian life, and the latter captured for history a semblance of a record of how the North American Indian lived. Yet they, and their less noteworthy successors, worked up their sketches with a European manner of seeing, so that many of the big truths failed to come through. Then in the early twenties there was a glimmer of light. Lawren Harris during this period did a series of Toronto slum studies, which even though humanity does not appear in them, nonetheless provide valid social commentary on the toll exacted by a growing industrialization. But Harris soon moved into

stylized depictions of Canadian nature with the result that his work in this vein is not large.

And when the thread was once more picked up, in the thirties, it was again social comment in which man himself does not appear. Those were the depression days, with thousands lacking employment and factories and farms deserted for want of a market. A few of our artists found the theme irresistible. A notable example was the work of Carl Schaefer. Rusting agricultural machinery, desolate agricultural holdings; nothing needed to be added to these symbols to convey the human tragedy of those times.

Yet it was the official war art of the 1939-45 conflict which first brought social comment out into the full open. These official artists were servicemen, and understandably could not give an entirely personal expression to their sentiments. But somehow even this limitation was no serious bar. Canadians as a people this art said unequivocally, see no glory in battle and view with disgust its omnipresent waste and cruelty. Sometimes Canadian service personnel appear in these pictures, more often they do not. Either way it does not matter — what comes through, whether it be the work of Jack Nichols, Carl Schaefer, Lawren Harris, Jr., Will Ogilvie, or Charles Comfort, is pretty much the same. Canadians fought because they conceived thus lay their duty. They are incapable of making a case for war, however, as a valid means for the settlement of disputes. Ironically these official paintings represent the only substantial contribution to Canadian social comment.

What other names remain ? Jack Humphrey has done some sensitive studies of children distinctly Canadian in their 'feel', and there are a few post-war Charles Comfort portraits, which are more than simply this: they are telling essays in character. It is so too with the distinguished talk of people by Prudence Heward and Paraskeva Clark (the admirable examples of the latter are lamentably few), which bear the badge of serious literature in paint. Then artists as diverse as Jacques de Tonnancour, Jori Smith, Henri Masson, Peter Aspell and Miller Brittain have all, according to their own fashion, demonstrated a healthy interest in human values. But the volume of their output is too small to support water-tight conclusions on the Canadian way of life. Lillian Freeman could be cited : her people are perceptively and charmingly done. Yet her truths are rather of the international kind, facts which the ordinary man shares with all his brothers, and they illumine the Canadian scene, with no particularly individual light.

And this, in brief, is almost the full statement of social comment in Canadian painting. Our painters suggest that we be chary of the fruits of uncontrolled industrialization, and they describe something of the human hurts stemming from economic disorder. They proclaim our loathing for war, and our willingness to fight only if the aim is the outlawing of such inhumanities. The few fleeting glimpses of the Canadian face and character provide no adequate basis for broad generalizations about how we really are, or what we do. Only one conclusion indeed is possible: in this aspect of our art we are at this stage as in our literature strangely tentative and taciturn.

Nor can it be argued that this reticence is an inevitable consequence of a country which is young. Mexican art, equally youthful, is replete with social comment. Important revelations of the Mexican character and social problems distinguish numberless canvasses. Is it then an element of the Canadian soul that we are poor talkers about ourselves, still incapable of genuine self-expression or unwilling for some elusive reason to lay bare our inner selves ? It is thus certainly with our literature, which provides few successful delineations either of the growing special flavour of the Canadian character, or of the nature of our personal relationships. It may not be completely apposite, but even our postage stamps avoid this personal factor. Apart from the Royal representations designs for our stamps confine themselves largely to non-human symbols; Canada geese, grain elevators, wigwams and wild animals. Or is it a basic fact of ourselves that we are fearful of personal talk or of committing ourselves openly about delicate social problems ?

I question whether it is quite thus. Our artists so far have been preoccupied primarily with resolving the problem of an indigenous idiom, and with an explanation of our somewhat spectacular geography. Moreover, we represent a new people, stemming principally from two old world races, and like a newly married couple still in the situation of adjusting our respective qualities and values to a common union. Then the facts of life for most of our artists, who must earn their keep by other means, provide small chance for reflective talk of the intricacies of human behaviour. Yet even assuming this is a warranted conclusion, it scarcely gives satisfaction.

In every age and civilization disinterested depictions of people, of their sorrows and joys and with reference to their own special background, have counted as the supreme challenge and calling of the artist. It is only necessary to ponder the pictures of the past to acknow-

ledge that such are the ones which influence most forcibly successive generations. And if one had to choose a single picture of our period that would bear weight in the future a likely selection might be Picasso's "Guernica". This indictment of innocent suffering carries truths important to mankind at any stage in its history. Our position then seems uncomfortably clear. Canadian painting, if it would enter the international mainstream, must reach out toward a strong and personal communion with mankind and his works.

HARRY ROSKOLENKO

PARIS POEMS (9)

My cat is a striped critic of Paris :
Gray in fur, full to nose and purr,
He tears the daily journals, a scavenger
Etching toilet tissues from immense issues.

Often the cat is a theatre of goats,
A menagerie of arts, the zebra of all
That walks handsomely, his tail at Picasso,
And his rump pointing toward the Academy.

A magician of moods, the cat is Rimbaud
Eating all languages and alphabets,
Or Celine down below the last silk sewer,
Waiting for plush meat to adorn his whiskers.

But when sleep entangles his claws,
He dreams of females, alleys of bitches
Singing in Provençal, many pregnancies
And progenies, all bound for the Academy.

A Sunday Walk

Norman Levine

When he passed the condemned cottages and reached the first intersection, the old man knew that now he had walked this far, he would not turn back. He had always found this short distance down Ayr Lane difficult. The cobble stones were wet today. A steady but light stream of water continued to move over them. But there was something in his hesitancy not caused by the hazards of the weather. He was certain that no one, not even old Mrs. Hocking with her shaking-head would have any reason to be outdoors at this hour; yet these houses, now silent and well mannered with their curtains drawn, could not erase the jeers and loud laughter that came from them whenever he tried to walk by during the day. Often the children, encouraged by their parents, would throw stones at him. He did not mind the stones so much, but when they made fun of him, the way he walked and what he wore, laughed at him whenever he appeared, followed him as a chorus, chanting

Crazy Alfred Adams
Crazy Alfred Adams

he wanted to be able to run again, to run away from the noise, back to his cottage and lock the door. There he would remain all week. Only on Saturday mornings would he come out, just as he came out this morning, nervous and afraid, and walk to the harbour carrying a large empty pail in his right hand.

The sky was grey when he came to the first crossing. On his left the Palais de Danse with its green closed doors and a few painted signs flag-waving with the wind, was deserted. To the right, down Barnoon Hill, he watched and heard no noise. Satisfied, he looked up at the church tower standing higher than the houses. The small handle of the clock looked like a heart as it pointed past the seven. He passed garbage cans standing by stone steps, filled high, pushing up their Chinese coolie-hat tops. He was tired when he entered Fore street and walked towards the red pillar box to rest against it. From this position he could see the entire street before it turned into the harbour. The milkman had already placed his bottles of milk on the stone steps leading to the door of the blue-painted

cafe. One small bottle was sheltered beside *St. Peter's Finger*; by the pub's entrance, a bottle of milk somehow did not look incongruous. The bakery shop, the stationers, the fruit-merchants and restaurants were empty. Fore street had an angelic look. Everything was quiet. A gull cried. Alfred Adams looked down beside his pillar box and saw that a dog had been there before him.

Cautiously he crossed over and found an entrance in the white wall of the street. Stone steps led down. He walked down the steps. And as he walked he began to see the sea through the opening in the wall, as through a telescope. As he moved down towards the far opening of the tunnel, everything around him seemed to suddenly come into focus: the light on the pier, the noise of the gulls and the sharp sound of water running down one of the pipes outside a house. He could see and hear the water as it ran into a drain clogged with cigarette ends and blocked with paper. He heard the sound of the sea and the gulls long before he came through that passageway between the houses. He knew that this would be his last hiding-place before arriving at Stig's. Now he would have to leave the shelter of houses and tunnels and walk the full length of the harbour front, alone. He hesitated, not only from fear, but because here, before him, was the place he knew and loved; the brooding fishing village where he was born.

When young he sailed in the small boats in the Atlantic and sometimes up to the North Sea. So much of his life was spent fishing. Then, when he became too old for these long days and nights, he remained on land buying scrap iron, sails, rope, odds and ends of all kinds from the boats. He did not mind then when children followed him. For he lived by himself. He found that loneliness was not the same on water as on land. For the sea, just as this harbour, gave him something which the land could not give: a feeling of belonging. But that was all before. Now when a gale would turn towards the land so that the water ran upwards into the street, or the rain would come down so heavy that few people would be outside, he would go to the harbour and look for a longtime at the water coming in with force, pushing its way towards the land, with the wind blowing the spray back in white sheets. And though he would get wet and sometimes cough, he felt cleansed from the hate of the people in the village. He wondered why they were against him. He had little to do with any of them. Except for Mrs. Jacobs. And he knew now, as from yesterday, that even she could not be trusted.

Never again would he eat any of her dinners, but throw it down into the gutter. But why did Mrs. Jacobs want to poison him? And what about the others? They laughed when he said that he heard voices coming down the chimney. "How could you hear them Alfred" said Mrs. Jacobs when she brought him his bottle of milk, "when you're quite deaf and can hardly hear when I'm shouting?"
But he did hear.
He heard what they were all saying about him.

"He woke us up with his raving again last night. He's more often like that now. But quite harmless."

"Its no use my going in. He'll only tell me to clear out!"

"So he was, at it again, the other night, his face sweating, jabbering to himself, crouched in front of the grate."

"O leave him be! He's just old and lonely. And nobody wants him."

But he knew that it wasn't because of the voices that they laughed at him. Or because he slept in an old wooden box as far away from the chimney as possible. He knew that they were against him because he remained in his cottage all week, and painted. Not like those real painters who went to school and had studios facing the sea and put up their boards in the street or in the sand in the harbour. But using the sides of old cardboard boxes and ordinary ship's paint, he would paint the ships that he remembered. And sometimes he would paint the harbour. For he knew the harbour as few people living in the village knew it. He knew it as a home to which he would return after spending days at sea, watching it roll out to meet him, warm and friendly as a mother. He knew the town from his walks through the streets asking for scrap iron. In his damp cottage, he painted what he remembered. He would paint all week, then on Sundays he would place newspaper over his paintings and put them away. He would spend the rest of that day sitting in the wooden box which he used as a bed and read the Bible with a large magnifying glass.

But now the tide was almost in. Most of the boats were upright, floating. A few of the larger ones still lay on their sides, resting in the sand. Near the far side of the quay he could see a policeman walking. The water was now almost high enough to cover the sandbar that lay like an animal across the harbour's mouth. Alfred Adams came out from the opening in the wall. Sounds of voices came from the Harbour Cafe. Women were talking loudly as they washed the

floor. He walked over to the harbour railing. Gulls wailed mournfully. He smelt the sea and the seaweed that the tide brought in and around the stones and ropes that held the boats. The water was very clear. He could see the bottom. And the gulls swam up to the edge of the water where the stone rose sharply. The water was not completely in, and they began to walk as soon as they could feel the bottom with their legs.

The old man carrying that large pail in his right hand continued to walk along the front as rapidly as his age allowed him. Sometimes he would look ahead, as if for assurance, trying to shorten the distance that he still had to walk, then, frightened, he would turn his head and scrutinize the holes in the walls beside the harbour cafes, or the openings that led into streets between Fore street and the front. A gull from the top of the Grill Bar perched on the stone roof bent his head at him and with closed beak, whined. Some French sailors in their rust coloured oilers were rowing out in a boat around the pierhead towards the deep water and their boats. He looked at the sides and at the stairs of the Copper Kettle. No one was there. No one was hiding against the wall of the harbour, or in the dark entrances still kept dark by a gray sky. Soon it would all be over. Soon he knew he would end this walk and be able to sit down where it was warm and rest. His pail would be filled with his week's supply of cardboard and paint. He would talk, drink hot coffee and smoke his pipe with Stig. And after he had rested and collected his supplies, he knew that Stig would take him back to the cottage. That together they would walk along the harbour front, by now filled with the movement of people, dogs, cats and carts; through Fore street with its crowded shops, until they reached Ayr Lane. The postman and the fisherman would be out, and there would be that Saturday crowd at the Slipway where the fish lay in those large wicker baskets, being auctioned off. And he would walk different now. Gone would be that nervousness and the feeling of being hunted. There was no need to walk frightened with Stig beside him. Stig was strong and they liked Stig. They drank with him in *St. Peter's Finger* and sang with him at night by the harbour-rails underneath the light. For Stig was an attraction for tourists. His paintings and sculptures were known far past this fishing village. The many tourists who came in summer with their cameras and filled the streets flowing with ice-creams, sand-shovels and blond-bleached faces, would often take photographs of Stig as he walked

through the streets. Sometimes young students would come to the village and take the same walk as he was now taking to Stig's Tower, and there Stig would answer their questions, and show them around his workshop. And the old man walking alone along the front knew that even now Stig would be waiting, brewing the coffee. He always looked forward to these Saturday mornings. No matter what the weather — even when the gale warning was flying black from the top of the hill — old Alfred Adams always arrived at Stig's Tower, exhausted and sometimes cold, with his pail empty; then returned with Stig, his pail full, and with a feeling of warmth that came from the hot coffee, the talk, and the walk back together. In anticipation of all this, the old man quickened his pace.

Unknown to the old man, three boys lay close together behind a large freshly painted boat overturned near the Lobster Pot. They crouched like conspirators together, watching the moving figure. One of them a tall dark boy with a small dirty face, said in a whisper. "Let him pass." The other two at first did not understand their leader's order. The second in command, also dark with cheeks round almost as circles and with thin lips wondered at this variation in the morning's tactics. The smallest, crouched timidly beside the boat, frightened of the leader, huddled behind the second in command, afraid of doing something wrong. The eyes behind the boat watched the old man look towards their hiding-place and saw that frightened face explore the crevices around them. This was the only part of the performance which was still a game, for if he did see them: What then? What would he do? But the old man appeared more interested in continuing his journey than finding what he was looking for. When he passed the boat, the leader pushed out from the hiding-place. The other two followed.

The tall boy had large stones in both hands. The others carried sticks as well as stones. And as the morning began to lift itself from the harbour, as activities started here and there — a small cart with a horse standing beside a boat, and men throwing fish from the boat to the wheeled cart with iron hooks, while an old woman stood with a large pail on the small road scraping manure — this little drama of age and youth continued to stalk along the waterfront.

The old man either sensed the danger behind him, or knew from past experience what to expect. As the boys closed in, and he turned to meet them, a look almost of acceptance came across

his face. The stones hit the old man in the face and body. He tried to shield himself with empty pail, but this action allowed one of them to rush in close and hit him in the legs with his stick and knock him down. As soon as they saw that he was down, they jumped on top of him and began to strike him with their fists shouting. "Crazy old man, Crazy old man, seeing ghosts are you?" And because he offered little resistance they began to abuse him. One lifted up the old man's sweater so that his fists could strike the flesh. Another tried to pull off the baggy trousers. The tall boy attempted to take the empty pail, but Alfred Adams held on with both hands, so that after a while, the boy lost interest in the pail and kicked the old man in the stomach. The second in command followed the leader's example and kicked the stomach again and again. But the smallest boy could only watch. He just stood there, slightly quivering, and watched the others kick the man and hit him with the sticks until the blood came. At first, the other two did not notice that the small one was not joining in. The leader was the first to sense that someone was standing behind him. He turned around.

"What's wrong with you?"

The young one remained silent.

"Come here!"

The young one seemed to be hypnotized with fear.

The leader was just about to hit him when the second in command burst out laughing. "Look at that will you. He's pee'd in his pants again."

And now the leader also saw the small trickle and the wetness. The small one began to run away. The others turned quickly to the old man on the ground. The leader picked up the cap from the road and began to chase the young one. The second in command looked at the old man, kicked him again in the stomach, and followed his leader.

Old Alfred Adams pushed himself up, picked up his pail, wiped his nose with his hand, and continued to walk. He walked differently now. There was no need to look in the shadows. What he had expected, had happened. Just as it had happened almost every Saturday morning. A toothless man came out of the Tregenna Cafe carrying a large pail of rubbish to the side of the harbour rails. He threw the garbage into the harbour. Soon gulls left the roofs and sand and flew towards the spot. The man noticed Alfred walking un-

steadily, his clothes disarranged and dirt on his face. He began to laugh. The toothless mouth looked black. "What's wrong Alfred, little ghosts again, or were they little devils this time?" But the old man walked on in silence. He did not stop for a drink from the water-fountain near the Slipway. He walked, leaning forward, not looking at the wall of the harbour front. It didn't matter now. The wind was picking up and the gulls appeared cold as they swam or else hunchbacked stood by the water's edge. He came near the Sloop Inn. No sign of life. He turned up Fish street, passed the open car park, narrowly avoided a large taxi that came down the hill filled with baggage and people going to catch the morning train. He walked on almost mechanically. His movements were instinctive. It wasn't far now. He liked the small houses up Island Road. He had always liked these small houses on this straight street with its low stone and their two doors like horse-stables. Two fishermen went by with a wicker basket of lobster bait. Red mullet looking like skinned rabbits. Pinky colour with white eyes. And as they went by, one of them picked up a red mullet and pretended he was going to hit the old man. The old man instinctively huddled his head. And the others laughed and replaced the lobster bait. And why shouldn't he paint? Why did they laugh at his boats and harbour? The Devil will get them all in the end. Them and the village.

The wind was cold and the boys had hurt him. But now he could see the stone high-gabled Tower where Stig lived. Soon the Saturday walk would be over. Soon he would knock on the door and hear Stig's friendly voice.

"Come on in Alfred. I am just making some coffee."

And then Alfred would climb up the steep stairs, to the top and enter that familiar room with the paintings on the wall and the stove, bed, table and chairs. And Stig would jump to meet him and pull him up the last step and take the pail away from him and ask him, half laughing and half worried, if he had any trouble. And Alfred would try to minimize the hurt and pretend it was nothing.

"Only them boys again."

"Did they hurt you Alfred?"

And Stig would look for any visible hurt on his face and sometimes he would be able to detect something missing, like this morning's cap. And Alfred would vary his reply, often he couldn't hide the pain, especially when his face was cut, and his mouth

bleeding. And then Stig would curse. "Damn this place, Alfred. This whole place stinks! They don't trust anyone who is different." And the old man would answer apologetically, "But it's not their fault, it's the Devil in them, and they don't understand, like sometimes I don't understand why I want to paint, an old man like me." And Stig would remember the small bundle of paints and the old cardboard boxes that he had wrapped up the night before, and he would put them into the pail. And then he would give Alfred a hot cup of coffee. And after the coffee, he would ask Alfred what troubles he was having. And Alfred would reply awkwardly. "Them boats are allright, but when I want to paint one sailing around the head of the quay into the harbour, I have to paint them standing on an end. They don't look like them boats by those real painters, but can't seem to do it no other way." And Stig would tell him to keep on, if that was the way he saw the boats. And Alfred would tell him what he had painted during the week and sometimes he would tell him that he could not sleep at night, that the Devil came down the chimney and through the fireplace and kept hitting him on the head, and told him that he was coming to get him. And the only way he could make him go back up the chimney was by shouting loud until he heard nothing. Then Stig would remain silent and the old man would think that even Stig had forsaken him. But Stig would come over and put his arm around him and tell him not to worry about the voices, for he also had them. His did not come down the chimney, nor would they hit him on the head. But often he would sit alone, looking outside at the sea from the window of the Tower, and think of nothing for hours and hours. And his voices would make him depressed and not want to work. And he often thought and wondered what had people like himself and the old man done, that they should be punished by living all alone. And he would tell Alfred that the only way he could stop his voices was to run down to the Cove and plunge into the water, then go to *St. Peter's Finger* and talk to some of the people and drink and laugh with them. And when morning came, he would be able to work. But the old man listening to what Stig had just said, seemed not to understand, so that Stig would burst out laughing and point to a gull trying to pick at an old fish down below the window. And then Stig would take the pail. And the old man's face would brighten as they walked together across the harbour front so that everybody could see. And no one would dare to throw stones, not

now. And the cuts and bruises were quite easily forgotten when Stig walked back with him, talking to him, remarking about people that they were passing, saying Hello to someone he knew, smiling or waving to someone else further away. And the old man felt that no matter what danger and physical pain he had to go through getting to the Tower, it was worth it, just to be able to walk by these people with Stig beside him.

The path to the Tower was rough with stones. He could see the washing on the slopes of the Island and the nets laid out for the sun to dry. The Island looked very green. An old fishing boat lay rotting on the ground. The bottom was ripped open and grass grew through the wood. He could hear the surf breaking in the small cove near the Tower. A few pieces of stone lay by the side of the wall. A large crane and pulley rested on the ground. He walked up to the door, tired from his walk, and knocked. He knew that soon he would hear the familiar sound of Stig coming down. But the only sound he heard was of the sea and a few gulls. He waited and knocked again. This time twice. Still nothing happened. He did not understand. He looked up to make sure that it was the Tower. He saw the wrought iron mask of a grotesque grinning face with large empty eyes and a twisted mouth nailed above the door. He saw the raised iron letters S T I G just underneath the mask. But no sound or movement. He didn't know what was wrong. Stig had always been there waiting for him. He knocked again. He stepped back and went around the Tower, looked up at the small window always open to let the air in. But it was shut. The chimney that always had smoke coming out, was now sticking up, looking large and empty. He returned to the door. He could not understand why Stig was not there. This *was* Saturday morning. He had never forgotten before. He looked at his empty pail, trying to think where Stig would be. But he could not understand. He had never before had to wonder whether Stig would be there, waiting for him, when he arrived. He did not mind not having the cardboard or the paints. But what if Stig should not be there next Saturday morning? In front of the door, he stood with his face down, holding the empty pail, and the wind made a noise as it went around the Tower.

Instinctively, he pushed on the door. It gave a little. He put the pail down and pushed with both hands. He could hear the sound of wood as it scraped concrete, and the door opened up for him to see that it was wedged in position by an old log which he had just

pushed back. He squeezed through the opening. Inside everything was silent. He called out 'Stig'. But no answer came from either the workshop or the bedroom upstairs. He climbed up the stairs and he saw the empty room, tidy, with the low bed not slept in. The garbage pail had not been emptied and it stood beside the stove. The stove was not going, the ashes were cold. He went down the stairs, bewildered and not understanding, looking hopelessly around the room for the familiar face. But all he saw were various figures, cold and frozen into their positions. A figure of a mermaid and an angel, a horse's head over the work-bench, a small stone frog on a chair. He bumped into a large piece of alabaster of a man praying. And he felt uncomfortable in this room with all these pieces of silent stone. He could see some letters lying inside the door. He saw the bundle of paints and cardboard beside the first step, but he did not want them now. He was confused. He could only think of Stig not being there, not waiting for him; and of that walk back, alone through the village. He had never imagined that he would have to walk back alone through the village awake and moving with people. And he wondered why Stig had let him down. He became like a dull instrument. He ceased to feel the cuts and bruises or the humiliation by the boys. His body felt the cold when he stepped outside, but he was as a man exhausted from a long walk, and the cold somehow did not hurt as much, nor did the beating, nor the laughter of the fishermen. He only felt that Stig had hurt him in a way the others could never have done.

And as he began to retrace his steps from the Tower, the full horror of the return walk through the village on a busy Saturday morning, came to him. He became frightened. But not like before. Then he knew what to expect, that somewhere the boys would be waiting for him, but there was always the satisfaction of that majestic walk back with Stig, to more than replace any pain or hurt he might have suffered. He passed that same old hull of the boat with its bottom ripped open and the grass growing through the wood. Ayr Lane seemed far away. The old man, confused and disappointed, and hurt in a way he had not been hurt before, shuffled along with his empty pail. There was nowhere he could go except back to his cottage.

GEORGE WALTON

FOR MY CHILDREN

In unexpected lakes
expanding from idle rivers
on our western prairies
were never seen swimming
mermaidens, never.

Smouldering fires on far horizons
are always straw or stubble burning;
none was ever proven to be
the incineration of the Phoenix.

I have cast about coulées and gullies,
and quartered the bluffs on the brows of the valleys,
but I have never raised a unicorn,
never yet has one broken cover
and streaked like a beam of light to the distant hills.

But I have not missed these marvels,
for I have seen you, breaking out of the long winter,
laughing, hair in the wind and running, running
over the dead, brown prairie,
to worship and wonder at the first pasque-flowers of spring.

BOOKS

THE TIGHT-ROPE WALKER, by Norman Levine. Totem Press, London. 30 pages. $1.75.
CALL MY PEOPLE HOME, by Dorothy Livesay. Ryerson, Toronto. 24 pages. $1.00.
THE TREASURES OF THE SNOW, by Arthur S. Bourinot, Ryerson, Toronto. 16 pages. $1.00.

The contemporary writer and the contemporary critic face together, sometimes from opposite sides of the fence, a difficult and delicate situation, not indeed completely novel, but peculiarly tense in our time. Neither can be unaware of the obstacles to new writing set up by the achievements of the past. Neither can, or should, be satisfied with mere repetition of what he knows has been as well done, or better done before. Yet the mass of English literature is so great that what is known is known only to a few, and what for one audience is hackneyed, may for another be only pleasingly familiar, or even novel and exciting. The distinction between esoteric and exoteric literature is well attested as far back as the time when the poet was not distinguished from the medicine man. Only with the spread of general literacy did it begin to seem remarkable, and even reprehensible.

This is unfair, for the intended audience is part of the writer's material. What he manipulates, if he is writing for publication, is not words in the abstract, but the expected reaction of an audience to the words they read or hear. Ideally the critic should be able to identify the intended audience, put himself in its place, and judge each work in its appropriate context. Literary history does not exhaust the province of criticism; it is not enough to describe a work and list influences: a critic must attempt to say, "this poem is of such-and-such a kind, and it is, or is not, good of its kind, for the following reasons." The writer, whether seeking to awaken familiar responses, or pursuing the continual slight novelty that was long ago recognized as essential to poetry, must watch carefully for the operation in his work of the law of diminishing returns. For him, this law produces a curve that mounts rather slowly to a maximum, then very swiftly plunges to negative values.

Norman Levine's book (beautifully produced by the Totem Press) is directed mainly towards a poetically sophisticated audience,

and is most successful when so directed. Images and allusions are crammed and condensed, connections rarely explicit. It is ingenious poetry, particularly effective in pictorial description and emotional interpretation of landscapes with figures. Almost everything happens for the eye, a little for the sense of touch, for the ear almost nothing. The general tone is sober, to the point of suggesting a deliberate exclusion of enjoyment, except the enjoyment of artistic creation. Alterations from earlier versions are generally an improvement, moving from the descriptive to the evocative, and with an improved rhythm, though the music remains a little monotonous. In the more reflective poems the slightness of content is not adequately relieved by brilliance of execution, and there is a dangerous tendency towards sentimentality. The pictures show alert and sensitive observation. The search for originality of expression, however, sometimes leads to the use of rather tenuous allusions, and images relevant in a partial momentary aspect, but whose immediate impression and dominant significance are incompatible with the apparent intention, or images separately intelligible, that do not readily compose. Yet surely the main effort of composition should lie with the writer, not the reader. Mr. Levine's work is rarely marred by the common trick of spurious identification, in which the observer, with a hop skip and shuffle attempts to become the thing observed. The reference of pronouns, however, is often ambiguous, sometimes baffling; and occasionally the reader is invited to achieve participation in a scene, in the pictorial or emotional values of an image, then is suddenly shouldered out by a first-person pronoun tacking up a no-trespass sign, a too facile device that Mr. Levine could afford to void. There remain some poems and passages, the 27 Lullabies, for example, in which I cannot understand why one word has been chosen rather than another, or why the order of words should be what it is. There comes a point where a reader too is aware of the law of diminishing returns in the task of interpretation. Yet after all reservations there is careful and vivid work in this book, and a sympathetic imagination.

The greater part of Dorothy Livesay's Chapbook is addressed to a wider audience, an audience that must be cajoled, not coerced into attention, people who need poetry, but get little or none of it. The title-poem partakes of the nature of serious oratory, aiming less at display of virtuosity than at persuading people of something, in this case at evoking a sympathetic and understanding frame of mind by a series of short dramatic monologues dealing with the war-time transfer of the Japanese from the West Coast. The other and shorter

poems exhibit this writer's customary dexterity in the choice and organisation of apt imagery for a unified effect, and have regained the controlled and accurate music of her earlier work. The long poem, though the technique was foreshadowed in *Day and Night,* breaks new ground, being intended primarily to be heard, not looked at. The problem here is similar to that of many teachers and some public men, the difference between a lecture and an article. In presentation for the ear the range of attention at any moment is much narrower, and movement is strictly in one direction. Considerable concession must be made to the audience's need for repetitions, for easy transitions, for a syntax at once loose and clear, for a sustaining current of reasonably familiar phrasing to carry the striking moments that challenge attention. Not having heard the radio presentation, I do not know how far the printed version differs from the original script: the experience of a teacher suggests that it ought to differ considerably, though what is true for prose does not necessarily hold for verse. Certainly this script reads easily, the characters are nicely differentiated by rhythm as well as by language, the emotional tone is never dubious, and does not slip into sentimentality, the images avoid affectation, and the whole work is well proportioned. It looks like a promising direction for development.

Arthur Bourinot's Chapbook is directed to an audience for whom poetry is neither problem nor persuasion, but an inattentive pastime, and who seek in verse above all the comfort of the familiar. This they will find.

L. A. MacKay.

THE PASSIONATE NORTH, by William Sansom. Clarke-Irwin, Toronto. $1.75.

BURNING BRIGHT, by John Steinbeck. MacMillan's, Toronto. $3.25.

Here are two recent works of fiction which deepen one's conviction that talk of the 'plight of fiction' is not mere talk. For these books are by two of the best-known and most respected writers of the English-speaking world, and yet they are disappointing stuff. In the first place, the books are both admitted by their authors to be bastards. Mr. Steinbeck, in a ponderous and pretentious Foreword, describes his as a "play-novelette"; and Mr. Sansom speaks of his, much more modestly, as at once a book of stories and a kind of travel book. This very self-consciousness is a bad sign, as is the fact that

both writers have apparently lost faith in the orthodox forms of fiction.

It is clear from these books, and from many other recent ones, that a strong reaction has set in against realism in fiction. It is no longer enough to re-create a place and a people, to make vivid a certain area of ordinary human experience; the novel or the short story must now have "significance", and this is to be achieved by symbolism, by poetic overtones, by the techniques of parable and allegory. Without minimizing the effectiveness which a master can achieve by the use of these techniques, I feel that we should be on our guard against accepting this attitude as necessarily the right or the progressive one. Kafka's novels are brilliant; but Kafka is a very difficult model for a second-rate writer to follow. I recall a statement in one of George Meredith's letters to the effect that realism is a good method for lesser writers. It is. At least one can't go far wrong with it. If Steinbeck had stuck to it we should have been spared the embarrassment of reading this latest production.

Burning Bright — notice the title from the fashionable Blake — is the story of an elderly, sterile man married to a young woman. He desperately wants a child, and is unaware that he is incapable of engendering one. To keep him happy, his wife permits herself a strange interlude with a brassy young man who desires her; a baby is conceived and ultimately born; the husband of course discovers the truth and, after a temporary rebellion, accepts the situation and, indeed, glories in it. The young man, however, is disposed of by having him pushed overboard by a character who is referred to throughout as "Friend Ed." The whole story is told so sentimentally that one is embarrassed throughout its reading. Here is a passage, taken from the final chapter, which will illustrate what I mean:

> Her eyes were clearing now and her brain climbed up out of the gray ether cloud. " You are Joe Saul," she said. "You are my husband and you know?"
>
> "I know," he said. "I had to walk into the black to know — to know that every man is father to all children and every child must have all men as father. This is not a little piece of private property, registered and fenced and separated. Mordeen! This is *the Child*."

Mr. Steinbeck, obviously, has become so interested in Life that he has lost all interest in life. The things which did a good deal to redeem the sentimentality, the confused morality, of *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath* — the vivid pictures of a social

background, the touches of earthy humour, the whole sense of *particularity* — are completely lacking here. The characters are successful-neither as individuals nor as types, the setting is never clearly pictured. Mr. Steinbeck needs to open his eyes to the actual world again.

This is not a prescription required by Mr. Sansom. His eyes function admirably, especially when they are focussed on a landscape or on a piece of architecture. The finest things in his book are the descriptions, but they are so good in themselves that one often wishes that his attention were not being continually distracted from them by the requirements of the plots. A plot, for Mr. Sansom, is almost invariably something involving violence: murders and suicides crop up in nearly all the stories. Read individually, in magazines, the stories would probably be fascinating; but gathered together and read seriatim, they pall. Everything is a little too violent. It is as if Sansom had decided to explode once and for all — his title bears this out — the myth that southerners are passionate and northerners phlegmatic and austere. He has exploded it all right, but he didn't need to use quite such a heavy charge.

But Sansom's is a much better book than Steinbeck's. There are things in *The Passionate North* which are so compelling that one is never apt to forget them. There is one story in particular, about a quarrel between a man and his wife and her near-drowning in a slate quarry, that quite literally terrifies one; and there are many other vivid scenes in which the beauty of terror is magnificently evoked.

But after such a spicy diet, I do find myself nostalgic for the quiet, accurate, honest realism of Trollope and Gissing, Galsworthy and Bennett. Such writers may not take us to the heights, but they never plunge us into bathos. The finest fiction, of course, has the base of social realism and the superstructure of myth — as, for example, in the work of James, Lawrence, Joyce, and Woolf — but if we can only have one or the other, I much prefer the realism.

DESMOND PACEY.

THE GREAT AUDIENCE by Gilbert Seldes. The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited. $4.75.

Mr. Seldes gives us his lively opinions on the present state of movies, radio and television and their effect on some aspects of American culture.

His main thesis is that instead of appealing to a mass audience these media tend to create a minority audience — the adolescent. What is worse, the producers of this type of entertainment are intent on reducing all audiences to the adolescent level.

He examines many of the myths of the motion picture industry; the stock plots, stereotypes and situations of all three media and shows how these are used to prolong adolescence indefinitely. It is too frequently forgotten that the non-listener and non-viewer is not exempt from this influence. Since millions of people form the audiences their opinions and actions directly affect the non-participant.

The whole question of adolescence is related to political immaturity in the United States and the author has grave doubts concerning the ability of a free society to survive in a 'nation of teen-agers.'

All is not lost, however, for Mr. Seldes makes several pertinent suggestions — one of a financial nature which should appeal to the entertainment moguls — which would do much to raise the standard of aural and visual fare.

The author writes from wide personal experience in all the lively arts and the book is extremely readable and well illustrated with pointed analyses of many popular movies and radio programs.

H.G.D.

PROOIMIA. by Dallam Flynn. The Cleaners' Press, P.O. 6974, Congress Heights Station, Washington, D.C. $1.25.
BASIL BUNTING POEMS: 1950. The Cleaners' Press, Galveston, Texas (former location). $1.50.

These two books permit us to measure in two directions the influence that Ezra Pound exerts on modern poetry, in style and in content. They also give us the opportunity to note the individuality of a gifted poet, one who has been writing for twenty years without due recognition: Basil Bunting. "Two antipodal poets rise out of the generation first printed in the 1920's," reads a quotation from a magazine on the jacket, "Basil Bunting . . . and E. E. Cummings." This is extraordinary praise. And yet the appearance of these collected poems does seem to give Bunting the place he deserves, and that place is very high.

Dallam Flynn's *Prooimia* (Gr. pro-oimia, prefaces, preludes) is a first book. It consists of nine pages of tight, chiseled verse. Like

Martial in their satiric brevity, the poems seem to tame the tigers of anger into the classicism of Pound's hardest kind of structure. Technically, what interests Flynn is the progression of vowels in a poem; expressively, the satirical relation of poetry to contemporary fact. He has a specific program — as his prose preface to the Bunting poems testifies — which has served him well in this first tentative experiment. The standard he has set himself is unusually high for a first book; and the result is better than many a first effort in the Sandburg-Masters vein.

Bunting is not a young poet, he is a poet in full development. Some of his best work was already written in the twenties and a good amount appeared in Pound's *Active Anthology* (1933). The poems have real impact. Rarely, one reads a book which makes one, in desperation, almost give up writing. This is the effect of Basil Bunting. The metrics, and the manner of using language, history, and ideas, derive a great deal from Pound, also something from Eliot; but he has completely mastered the technique, and what is so admirable in the poetry is his own personal vitality. The whole poetry breathes a liberated personality that could not be smothered by any influence.

The form he uses most is the dramatic monologue, coming to him through Pound (the use of "personae"), which we associate with Browning. Most of the poetry, therefore, must be read as the movement of actuality ("logopoeia" — the dance of ideas) rather than as an arrested sequence of images and words. Yet he has both:

> "Under the olive trees
> Walking alone
> On the green terraces
> Very seldom
> Over the sea seldom
> Where it ravelled and spun
> Blue tapestries white and green
> Gravecloths and men
> Romans and modern men . . ."

This is lyric of the second type. But more characteristic, of the dramatic type, is the following. Villon's old woman who once was beautiful — symbol of decayed Venus in our time — goes with the poet to visit the Muse Polyhymnia. The Muse speaks:

> "What have you come for? Why have you brought the
> Goddess? You who

finger the goods you cannot purchase,
snuffle the skirt you dare not clutch.
There was never love between us, never less
than when you reckoned much. A tool
not worth the negligible price. A fool
not to be esteemed for barren honesty.
Leave me alone. A long time ago
there were men in the world, dances, guitars, ah!
Tell me, Love's mother, have I wrinkles? grey hair?
teats, or dugs? calves, or shanks?
Do I wear unbecoming garments?

The poem investigates the base condition of modern sexual "love" and the impossibility of its serving again for poetry :

"—with their snouts in the trough,
kecking at gummy guts,
slobbering offal, gobbling potato parings,
yellow cabbage leaves, choking on onion skin,
herring bones, slops of porridge . . ."
"Infamous poetry, abject love,
Aeolus' hand under her frock
this morning. This afternoon
Ocean licking her privities.
Every thrust of the autumn sun
cuckolding
in the green grin of late-flowering trees."

The choice of materials and emotions in this book — in many ways typical of the 1920's — adds to the canvas of the chaos of modern life and its confusion of values :

"Women swarm in Tauentsienstrasse.
Clients of Nollendorferplatz cafes,
shadows on sweaty glass,
hum, drum on the table
to the negerband's faint jazz."

Yet the poet who writes of this belongs to no lost generation. It is only because he has an integrity and conviction greater than the degradations of modernity that he does not flinch before his subject matter, and so conquers it for poetry.

Louis Dudek.

Correspondence

THE EDITORS:

Just to keep the record straight, may I disclaim membership in that "Western group of Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, Anne Marriott and others" which you discuss in your December-January issue as "the most clear-cut political group of the thirties". The company is good but I didn't keep it. I was so all-fired clear-cut political in the Thirties I regarded the writing of poetry as a treacherous withdrawal of energy from the class struggle. I allowed myself only three small verses before World War Two, none of which was "imagist", "political" or "concerned with the land and the fate of an agricultural class". They were just plain old fashioned regional exercises. The rest of my work was written in the Forties, from which I hope yet to be counted one of Mr. Horwood's survivors.

Earle Birney, Vancouver.

Contributors to this Issue

ANDREW BELL is the author of many articles on Canadian painting and has been a frequent contributor to *Canadian Art.*

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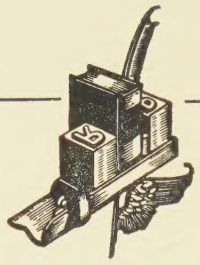

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